

INDO-CHINESE REFUGEES

In his statement to the House this afternoon, the Lord Privy Seal mentioned that the Prime Minister had sent a message to the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Hussein Onn, about the boat people. (Copy of statement attached).

We can confirm that the Prime Minister has sent a message today through diplomatic channels to the Malaysian Prime Minister appealing for the maintenance of humanitarian policies towards the refugees from Indo-China. We are not revealing the text of the Prime Minister's message but that is the thrust of it.

In general, as Sir Ian Gilmour's statement makes clear, we have urged interested Governments to support our proposal for an international conference to deal with the problem of Indo-Chinese refugees and have asked other countries to consider making additional offers of help and to bring their influence to bear on the Government of Vietnam to abandon policies which cause so much hardship for the refugees and for other countries in the area.

FURTHER MESSAGE TO DR. WALDHEIM

Sir Ian Gilmour's statement also says that the Prime Minister is sending a further message to Dr. Waldheim. For your information, this message has not yet been sent but is still being cleared with the Prime Minister. So we can only say that the Prime Minister is expected to send a further message to Dr. Waldheim about Indo-Chinese refugees. Our position remains that we think a special conference should be convened urgently to deal with this problem.

CVA

18 June 1979

TO BE CHECKED
AGAINST DELIVERY

BY PRIVATE NOTICE

*La Mr Peter Shore (Tower Hamlets, Stepney and Poplar): To ask the Lord Privy Seal, whether following his discussions with the Government of Hong Kong and the recent statements made by the Malaysian Government he will make a further statement of Government policy on the plight of refugees from Vietnam.

SIR IAN GILMOUR

The House is aware that my right honourable Friend The Prime Minister, proposed to the United Nations Secretary-General on the 31st of May that a special conference should be convened urgently under his auspices to deal with the problem of the Indo-Chinese refugees. The need to convene the conference soon has greatly increased since the proposal was made. My right honourable Friend is sending a further message to Dr Waldheim, in the light of the most recent events, and has sent a message to the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

We have urged interested governments to support our proposal, to consider themselves making additional offers

of help, and to bring their influence to bear on the Government of Vietnam to abandon the policies which are causing so much hardship for the refugees and for Hong Kong and the South-East Asian countries where they land. My honourable Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is now in Geneva for talks with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, on whom responsibility rests for protecting and assisting refugees.

This morning my ^{right} honourable and noble Friend has discussed the convening of the conference with the French Foreign Minister in Paris, who indicated to him that the French Government like others of the Nine, support our proposals.